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Homemakers' chat

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FALL CLOTHES FOR THE FAMILY. Information from home economists of the U. S. Department of Agriculture.

The days are getting shorter...evenings are cooler...why, you probably had to put a sweater on Junior the other night when he went out to play after supper. Yes, it's fall, and time to think about the family's fall clothes.

This year American women won't be going on a fall shopping splurge. For one thing, they're saving money for war bonds. Then too, they really and truly are trying to do their part by "using it up--wearing it out--making it do"...and that applies to clothes as well as everything else in the home.

There's a saying that in America the only difference between the possible and the impossible is that the impossible just takes a little longer to do! Keep that in mind when you're looking over the family wardrobe this fall. Even the most impossible-looking garment may contribute something toward the family's fall outfits, if you take time for a little planning and work.

How about getting out all the winter clothes?--even those old things that haven't been worn in years. Look over the clothes...sort them out...Of course it's easy to pick out the garments that are in good condition...you can wear them again this year just as they are. And it's easy to pick out the clothes that are too shabby to wear. Put them aside...we'll talk about them later.

Now you've sorted out the good clothes and the worn-out ones. What's left? ...The in-betweens...clothes that are out of style, or outgrown, and yet aren't worn enough for you to discard them without a twinge of conscience. Every closet has its share of these orphans...but with a little of that well-known American ingenuity, you can make them respectable members of the clothing family.

The first step is a little planning. Figure out who needs what: Maybe Junior has to have a new snow suit, or Mary has outgrown so many of her dresses she needs almost an entire new wardrobe.

After you've checked the clothing needs of the family, get out your fashion-books and magazines. Study the styles. Then study your old clothes to see how they can be re-styled or re-made. You know, made-over clothes don't have to look pieced-together...if you plan and work carefully you can re-style clothes to look as good as anything you'd buy.

Dresses are often discarded because they don't fit right. Suppose a dress is too small...you can make it wearable in several ways. If it's too tight across the shoulders, you might put in a new yoke of contrasting material. For sleeves that are too tight, insert a contrasting strip in the center of the sleeve, or a strip of matching material at the seam of the sleeve. For a dress that's too narrow through the hips or the bust, insert a panel down the front. A new back, collar, and sleeves cut from an old knitted sweater or dress can transform a tight dress into a comfortable one.

If your Junior Miss has outgrown her clothes and the hems are too skimpy to do any good, lengthen them by adding a band of contrasting material...or set the extra material into the skirt in several bands...or perhaps you can make a colorful belt effect by setting the new material in at the waistline. Touches of the contrasting fabric make a nice trim elsewhere on the dress...perhaps on the collar or pockets.

You probably have at least one dress with those full puff sleeves that date it back to the 1930s. Why not take out the sleeves and re-cut them...and, if they're long, perhaps cut them to three-quarter length? Make the shoulder pad smaller and flatter too...you'd be surprised how that can modernize a dress.

And here's another popular idea for make-overs: an old dress converted into a jumper. Just take out the sleeves, and shape the armholes and the neckline.

Almost every family wardrobe contains a suit that Dad has become a little too well-rounded to wear..or a top coat left behind by a boy in uniform. There's good wool in these garments...too good to be left idle. Rip the garments carefully...wash and press the pieces...and you'll have fine material for a coat or suit for one of the youngsters...or you may even work out a handsome tailored suit for yourself.

Up to now we've been talking about clothes that have good material in them but are out of style, or bad-fitting. Now let's talk about that pile of old worn-out clothes...the things you put aside because they're too patched and shabby to be worn. They're not really hopeless though...as long as there's any good material left in them.

For example, how about combining two old dresses?..The skirt of one might go very well with a sleeveless jacket made of another...Or you may have a wool dress or suit so mended and patched it's not fit to wear. By avoiding the worn spots you'll often find enough good material for a child's dress or trousers. And old cotton clothes--house dresses, housecoats, or men's shirts--can make fine dresses, pinafores, shirts, or pajamas for the small fry.

Don't overlook wornout work clothes or overalls. Their tough fabrics make good play clothes for youngsters. And even old leather gloves and other leather articles come in handy...as patches for the knees and elbows of winter play suits.

Of course you won't be able to re-make the family wardrobe in the same time you'd take to shop for new clothes. But by re-styling, and making over, you'll have the satisfaction of knowing you're doing all you can to conserve the Nation's clothing supply. With care in cutting and sewing, you can turn out clothes your family will be proud to wear. Yes, there's plenty of American ingenuity still going strong. And even in make-overs, the American family is still the best-dressed and the most warmly dressed in the world.

